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Farm Broadcasters Letter

United States Department of Agriculture Office of Information Radio-Television Division Washington D.C. 20250 (202) 447-4330

Letter No. 2402

March 3, 1989

DEPUTY NAMED -- President George Bush announced his intention Feb. 28 to nominate Jack Callihan Parnell to be deputy secretary of agriculture, the Number 2 position at USDA. Parnell would succeed Peter C. Myers. Parnell has been director of the California Department of Food and Agriculture since 1987. Before that he was director of the California Department of Fish and Game. A native of Leavenworth, Wash., Parnell, who was born May 7, 1935, attended Healds Business College in San Francisco, Calif., and Sacramento City College. Parnell's nomination must be confirmed by the U.S. Senate.

DIET AND CHRONIC DISEASE -- The National Research Council has recommended Americans eat less salt, fat and cholesterol to avoid a wide range of chronic diseases. "We are delighted the focus and direction of dietary change recommended by the council is consistent with existing federal dietary guidance policy ...," said Dr. James Heimbach, acting administrator of USDA's Human Nutrition Information Service. The council recommended eating much more fruit, vegetables and starches and avoiding high-dose vitamin and mineral supplements. Contact: Dr. James Heimbach (301) 436-7725.

AG BUDGET A CONTINUING STORY -- In the months ahead, Secretary Clayton Yeutter will be working with Congress to reduce agriculture spending. He says by shifting deficiency payments from next year to this year, USDA can save \$800 million. President Bush has asked that federal farm expenditures be cut by \$1.9 billion from the level they would reach under current law.

CREDIT TO TEENS -- How much credit do you think is available to teenagers in this country? "Twenty-eight billion dollars," says Sharon Seiling, family resource management specialist at Ohio State University. Seiling says many department stores and other retail firms are now offering credit accounts to those younger than 18. Credit cards can teach teens how to manage money and be responsible for what they owe. Contact: Sharon Seiling (614) 292-2011.

CONSUMER'S WEEK is now set for April 23-29. Here's some story suggestions from USDA: How to get the most nutrition for your money when eating out; How we use wood products from our national forests every day; Cutting firewood; Safe cooking in your microwave; How school lunches are better today; Farmer's markets. Need helping finding USDA contacts? Call Marci Hilt (202) 447-6445.

SECRETARIAL TRANSCRIPTS -- Did you know we usually have transcripts of every press conference Sec. Yeutter has, usually on the same day of the conference? That means you can access it electronically on USDA's EDI service under "PRESS CONFERENCES" in the OGPA menu line or on Dialcom under "USDA NEWS." Or, if you're not in a hurry, call us, we'll be happy to send you a copy.

BIOCONTROL CENTENNIAL -- USDA will celebrate 100 years of biological control March 22. The centennial will commemorate the dramatic results USDA achieved by importing the Vedalia beetle (lady bugs) from Australia to rescue the California citrus industry from the cottony cushion scale, a highly damaging pest. USDA events will feature a media briefing and patio exhibit. Contact: Max Heppner (301) 436-7250. Other biocontrol events across the country include an International Vedalia Symposium March 27-30 at the Convention Center in Riverside, Calif. Contact: Janet White (714) 787-5304; and a Symposium on Biological Control at the HoTiDay Inn, Civic Center, McAllen, Texas, April 4-6. Contact: Margaret Webb (301) 436-6573.

U.S. FARM EXPORTS are expected to hit \$38 billion and 145 million tons this fiscal year. That's up \$2.7 billion over fiscal year 1988, as prices for corn, wheat and soybeans are expected to be the highest since 1985. Increased demand for U.S. grain has boosted the forecast. The U.S. agricultural trade surplus is expected to rise \$2.7 billion to \$17 billion, the highest since fiscal year 1984. Source: Exports Outlook & Situation Summary. Contact: Steve MacDonald (202) 786-1827.

DESIGNER PLANTS will be a reality if a USDA plant genome program gets off the ground. Down the road, it would help scientists decide ahead of time to construct plant varieties with certain desirable characteristics. Some traits scientists might seek: early maturity, disease resistance, high protein and more effective photosynthesis. First, however, scientists need to know which specific gene "messengers" tell a plant to create the desirable traits. Contact: Jerome P. Piksche (301) 344-2029.

MICROWAVE POPCORN -- Popcorn, loaded with saturated fats, salts, flavorings and preservatives for microwave ease, is far from the nutritional, low-calorie snack many Americans think they are eating, according to Mary Sweeten, a registered dietitian with the Texas Agricultural Extension Service. However, a few companies are offering microwave popcorn for the health conscious. Contact: Dr. Mary Kenney Sweeten (409) 845-1735.

IF IT WALKS LIKE A MUSCOVY ... The Wall Street Journal recently reported on the plight of the muscovy duck. Seems muscovys are unwelcome from Florida to Texas because they're "ugly suckers," "lumbering bombers," and dilute the wild duck gene pool by interbreeding with other ducks. The prolific creature could become the continent's most abundant duck. For the uneducated, muscovys are cute at hatching but grow to 15 pounds with dull feathers and a hunk of red wart-like skin covering their faces. However, there may be room for this ugly duck, according to the New York Times. In fancy New York and Los Angeles eateries, muscovy, which tastes a bit like beef, arrives dressed to the nines.

FROM OUR RADIO SERVICE

AGRICULTURE USA #1656 -- The nation has a new agriculture secretary, Clayton Yeutter. Brenda Curtis talks with him about the problems he will have to tackle in the next four years. (Weekly 13-1/2 min. documentary)

AGRITAPE/FARM PROGRAM REPORT #1645 -- USDA News Highlights, Introducing the new agriculture secretary, New look at Soviet crop prospects, A health care plan for calves. (Weekly reel of news features)

CONSUMER TIME #1137 -- New National Research Council report on diet and disease; food irradiation still stirring controversy; De-fattening beef; Weather service predicts summer water shortages; No budget cuts planned for food aid programs. (Weekly reel of 2-1/2 - 3 min. features)

UPCOMING -- Thursday, March 9, U.S. Crop Production, World Ag. Supply & Demand; Friday, March 10, World Grain/Crop Production, World Oilseed Situation, World Cotton Situation; Tuesday, March 14, Crop/Weather Update; Thursday, March 16, Milk Production, Cattle on Feed; Friday, March 17, U.S. Agricultural Outlook; Monday, March 20, World Ag Outlook; Tuesday, March 21, Crop/Weather Update, Catfish Production; Thursday, March 23, Poultry Production.

DIAL THE USDA RADIO NEWSLINE (202) 488-8358 or 8359.
Material changed at 5 p.m. EST each working day.

FROM OUR TELEVISION NEWS SERVICE

DOWN TO EARTH, AGRICULTURAL UPDATE and USDA NEWS SERVICE are available on satellite Westar IV, audio 6.2 or 6.8:

Thursdays AG UPDATE/USDA NEWS SERVICE, 7:30-7:45 p.m., EST,
Transponder 12D

Saturdays AG UPDATE/USDA NEWS SERVICE, 10:30-11:15 a.m., EST,
ORIGINAL UPLINK Transponder 10D

Mondays AG UPDATE/USDA NEWS SERVICE, 8:30-9:15 a.m., EST,
REPEAT UPLINK Transponder 12D

OFF MIKE

60 SECOND...National Agriculture Day public service announcement featuring Sec. Yeutter has been prepared for radio and TV. Radio version will be tagged onto this week's AgriTape/Farm Program Report portion of our weekly cassette service. Two TV versions will be offered on News Service satellite transmissions, first one goes up this week. Tape copies available from Marci Hilt (202) 447-6445. March is Nat'l Agriculture Month, 20th is Nat'l Agriculture Day.

15 MINUTE...radio-TV interview with Sec. Yeutter will be on radio weekly cassette and TV satellite transmissions of March 4 and March 6. Yeutter discusses a number of issues, which can be edited into separate items to meet your program needs. WBOY-TV Clarksburg, and WTRF-TV Wheeling, W. Va., have told us they plan to run the full 15-minute segment.

NEW LOCATION...for Doug Thomas from Southern States Network, Baton Rouge, La., to Progressive Farmer Network, Starkville, Miss.

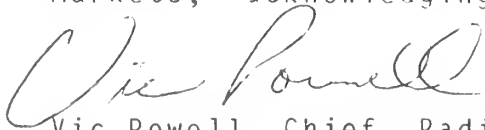
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FIRST...response to our request for comments about Headline News came from Brad Lemonds (KAIT-TV, Jonesboro, Ariz.). He uses the information for local story ideas. Mick Kjar (KTHI Fargo, N.D.) likes our increased offerings of interviews and short features. Nice to hear from Vince Phillips (Nat'l-American Wholesale Grocers, Falls Church, Va.) about the Farm Broadcasters Letter. We appreciate everyone's comments.

ANOTHER FIRST...was made by Lew Middleton (Agribusiness Net, Indianapolis). He was first to call about the extra zero in February 17 Farm Broadcasters Letter that was added to number of U.S. radio stations. Total should have been about 10,000.

NATIONAL CONSUMERS WEEK...theme this year is "Consumers Open Markets," acknowledging role of consumers in the economy.



Vic Powell, Chief, Radio & Television Division